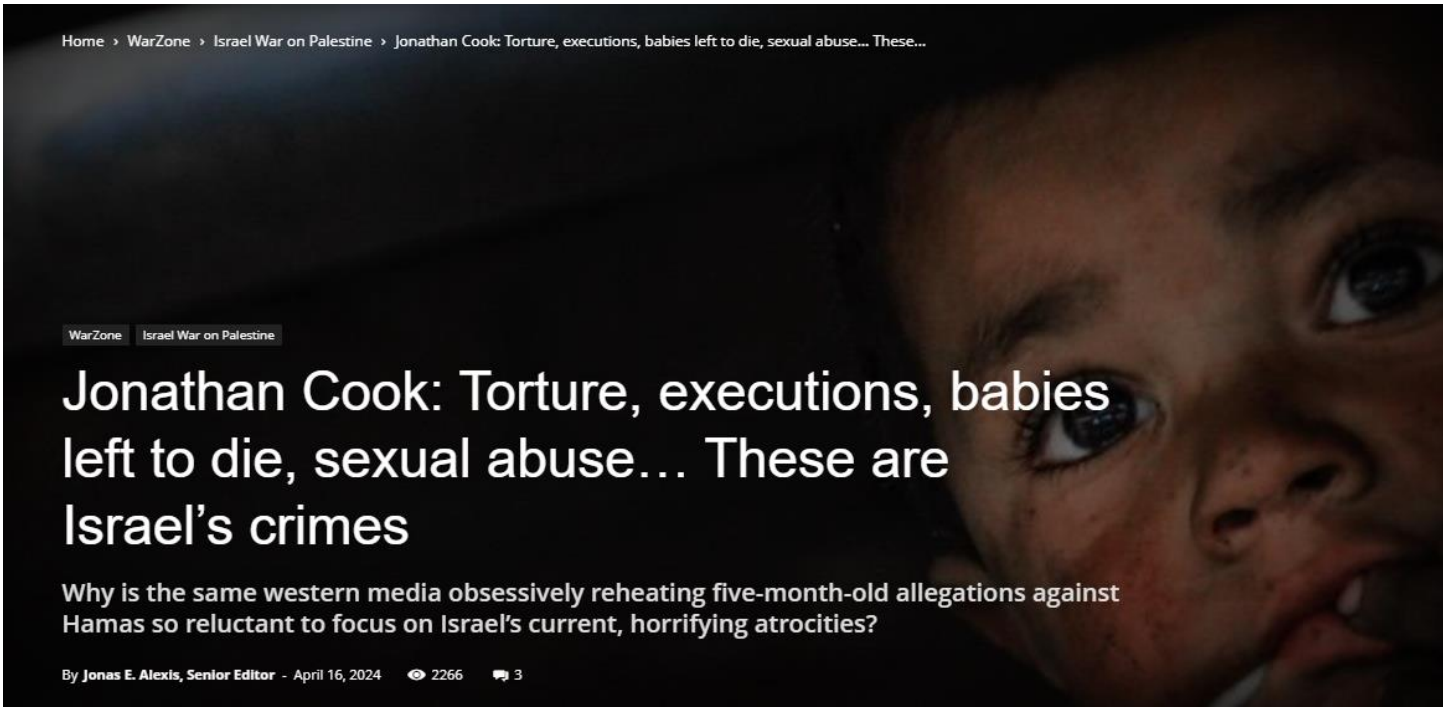
VT Foreign Policy



Why is the same western media obsessively reheating five-month-old allegations against Hamas so reluctant to focus on Israel's current, horrifying atrocities?

VT Condemns the ETHNIC CLEANSING OF PALESTINIANS by USA/Israel

$ 280 BILLION US TAXPAYER DOLLARS INVESTED since 1948 in US/Israeli Ethnic Cleansing and Occupation Operation; $ 150B direct "aid" and $ 130B in "Offense" contracts Source: Embassy of Israel, Washington, D.C. and US Department of State.

Hostages tortured to death. Parents executed in front of their children. Doctors beaten. Babies murdered. Sexual assault weaponised.

No, not Hamas crimes. This is part of an ever-growing list of documented atrocities committed by Israel in the five months since 7 October – quite separate from the carpet bombing of 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza and a famine induced by Israel's obstruction of aid.

Last week, an investigation by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz disclosed that some 27 Palestinians seized off Gaza's streets over the past five months are known to have died during interrogations inside Israel.

Some were denied medical treatment. But most are likely to have been tortured to death.

Three months ago, a Haaretz editorial warned that Israeli jails "must not become execution facilities for Palestinians".

Israeli TV channels have been excitedly taking viewers on tours of detention centres, showing the appalling conditions Palestinians are kept in, as well as the psychological and physical abuse they are subjected to.

An Israeli judge recently called the makeshift cages in which Palestinians are held "unsuitable for humans".

Remember, a large proportion of the 4,000 or so Palestinians taken hostage by Israel since 7 October – probably the vast majority – are civilians, like the men and boys paraded through Gaza's streets or held in a stadium stripped of clothing before being dragged off to a dark cell in Israel.

Women abused

According to Israeli media, many dozens of Palestinian women – including pregnant women – have been seized too, but in their case off camera.

Presumably, Israel has wished to avoid undermining its careful messaging that only Hamas weaponises violence against women.

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But according to United Nations legal experts, Palestinian women are suffering the most degrading forms of abuse at the hands of the Israeli military.

Soldiers are also believed to have taken photos of female detainees in degrading circumstances and then uploaded them online

The experts observed that Palestinian women and girls in detention were reportedly being subjected to "multiple forms of sexual assault, such as being stripped naked and searched by male Israeli army officers.

"At least two female Palestinian detainees were reportedly raped while others were reportedly threatened with rape and sexual violence."

Soldiers are also believed to have taken photos of female detainees in degrading circumstances and then uploaded them online.

Palestinian women and girls in Gaza are also reported by their families to have gone missing after contact with the Israeli army.

"There are disturbing reports of at least one female infant forcibly transferred by the Israeli army into Israel, and of children being separated from their parents, whose whereabouts remain unknown," they said.

Beatings, waterboarding

A separate report by the UN last week revealed that 21 of its staff – humanitarian aid workers – had been snatched by Israel. They were then tortured to extract confessions, most likely false, of involvement in Hamas' 7 October attack. Their torture included beatings, waterboarding and threats to family members.

Those confessions were cited by western allies as the grounds – in fact, the only known grounds – for cutting off funding to the UN relief agency Unrwa, the last lifeline for Gaza's starving population. It was these claims, extracted through torture, that helped Israel rationalise its imposing of a famine on Gaza.

Palestinian men rounded up and stripped by Israeli forces in Gaza before being taken to an undisclosed location (Screengrab/X)

Of the 1,000 detainees subsequently released, 29 were children, one as young as six, and 80 women. Some were reported to have cancer and chronic illnesses such as Alzheimer's.

According to the UN investigation, Palestinians reported severe punishment beatings, being caged with attack dogs, and suffering sexual assault. Physical evidence – such as broken ribs, dislocated shoulders, bite marks, and burns – was still visible many weeks later.

Executions, human shields

These horrors, of course, are not just taking place in cells and interrogation rooms inside Israel. Gaza is being subjected to astonishing levels of brutality and sadism from Israeli troops – quite aside from the carpet bombing and enforced starvation of civilians.

Israeli snipers have fired into Gaza's hospitals, killing medical staff and patients there.

The Israeli military has used Palestinians as human shields, including one man sent into a hospital, his hands bound, to announce an Israeli order to evacuate the premises. Israeli forces executed him on his return.

Those trying to follow such evacuation orders, waving white flags, have been shot at.

Medical facilities have been repeatedly invaded by the Israeli military in stark violation of international law. Those who could not be evacuated, such as premature babies, have been left to die unattended, even while Israeli soldiers were occupying the building.

This week, the BBC interviewed medical staff who reported being tortured, savagely beaten and having attack dogs set on them inside the Nasser hospital in Khan Younis after Israeli soldiers stormed it.

One, Dr Ahmed Abu Sabha, had his hands broken. He told the BBC: "They put me on a chair and it was like a gallows. I heard sounds of ropes, so I thought I was going to be executed."

The BBC interviewed medical staff who reported being tortured, savagely beaten and having attack dogs set on them inside the Nasser hospital in Khan Younis

At another stage, he and other detainees were beaten in the back of a truck, while only in their underwear. They were taken to a gravel pit, where they were made to kneel blindfolded. They believed they were about to be executed.

During his eight days as hostage, Sabha was never questioned.

Dozens more medics are believed missing, presumed to still be in Israeli detention.

Photographs published by the BBC also show patients in the grounds of Nasser hospital in beds with their hands bound tightly above their heads.

Those who died were left to decompose by Israeli soldiers. A doctor there, Dr Hatim Rabaa, told the BBC: "Patients were screaming, 'Please remove them [the corpses] from here'. I was telling them, 'It isn't in my hands'."

Other examples of murderous cruelty are documented daily. Unarmed Palestinians, including those waving white flags, have been shot dead by Israeli soldiers. Palestinian parents have been executed in cold blood in front of their children. There have been repeated episodes of Israeli forces gunning down en masse desperate Palestinians trying to reach aid, as happened yet again this week. And even Israeli hostages trying to escape their captors have been killed by the very Israeli soldiers they were trying to surrender to.

These are just some of the cases of Israeli sadism and barbarity that have surfaced briefly in western media coverage, soon to be forgotten.

Wiping Gaza off the map

The stomach-turning double standards are impossible to ignore.

The western establishment media has been chock full of the most lurid allegations of savagery directed against Hamas, sometimes with little or no supporting evidence. Claims that Hamas beheaded babies or put them in ovens – emblazoned on front pages – were later found to be nonsense.

A makeshift sign reading in Hebrew 'help, 3 hostages' using leftover food reportedly shown by Israeli hostages before being shot dead by Israeli soldiers, 17 December 2023 (AFP)
Accusations against Hamas have been endlessly reheated to paint a picture of a supremely dangerous and bestial militant group, in turn rationalising the carpet bombing and starvation of Gaza's population to "eradicate" it as a terrorist organisation.

But equally barbarous atrocities committed by Israel – not in the heat of battle, but in cold blood – are treated as unfortunate, isolated incidents that cannot be connected, that paint no picture, that reveal nothing of import about the military that carried them out.

If Hamas' crimes were so savage and sadistic they still need to be reported months after they took place, why does the establishment media never feel the need to express equal horror and indignation at the acts of cruelty and sadism being inflicted by Israel on Gaza – not five months ago, but right now?

This is part of a pattern of behaviour by the western media that leads to only one possible deduction: Israel's five-month-long attack on Gaza is not being reported. Rather, it is being selectively narrated – and for the most obscene of purposes.

War on Gaza: Israel's food-queue slaughter cannot go unpunished
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Through consistent and glaring failures in their coverage, establishment media – including supposedly liberal outlets, from the BBC and CNN to the Guardian and New York Times – have smoothed the way for Israel to carry out mass slaughter in Gaza, what the World Court has assessed as plausibly a genocide.

The role of the media has not been to keep us, their audiences, informed about one of the greatest crimes in living memory. It has been to buy time for US President Joe Biden to keep arming his most useful of client states in the oil-rich Middle East, and to do so without damaging his prospects for re-election in November's US presidential vote.

If Russian President Vladimir Putin was a madman and a barbarous war criminal for invading Ukraine, as every western media outlet agrees, what does that make Israeli officials, when every one of them supports far worse atrocities in Gaza, directed overwhelmingly at civilians?

And more to the point, what does that make Biden and the US political class for materially backing Israel to the hilt: sending bombs, vetoing demands for a ceasefire at the United Nations, and freezing desperately needed aid?

Worrying about the optics, the president expresses his discomfort, but he carries on helping Israel regardless.

While western politicians and commentators worry about some imaginary existential threat those brief events of five months ago pose to the nuclear-armed state of Israel, Israel is quite literally wiping Gaza off the map day by day, quite undisturbed.

Hamas 'started it'

There have been two, largely implicit defences for this glaring imbalance in western priorities. Neither stands up to even the most cursory scrutiny.

One is the argument that Hamas "started it" – insinuated in the endless claim that, in destroying Gaza, Israel has been "responding" or "retaliating" to the violence of 7 October.

This is a justification for killing tens of thousands of Palestinians and starving two million more that should never have been let out of the playground. But worse, it is patent nonsense. Hamas did not initiate anything on 7 October, except for handing Israel a pretext to wreck Gaza.

Hamas started nothing on 7 October. It was simply a new, and particularly gruesome phase in what has been decades of Palestinian resistance to Israel's belligerent occupation of Gaza

The enclave has been under a crushing siege for 17 years, in which its land, sea and air were patrolled constantly by Israel. Its population was denied the essentials of life. They had no freedom of movement apart from inside their cage.

Long before the current Israeli-induced famine, Israel's trade restrictions had ensured high levels of malnutrition among Gaza's children. Most exhibited too the scars of deep psychological trauma from constant and massive attacks by Israel on Gaza.

Biden crows about building a "temporary pier" – weeks or months down the road – to bring aid into Gaza that is desperately needed now. But there is a reason the enclave lacks a seaport and airport. Israel bombed the only airport back in 2001, long before Hamas took charge of Gaza. It has been attacking and killing fishermen trawling just off Gaza's coast for years.

Israel has refused to allow Gaza to connect to the world – and break free of Israeli control – ever since.

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Bogus narrative

The other implicit defence of western establishments constantly stressing Hamas' barbarism over Israel's is that the nature of those atrocities is said to be categorically different – in the apples and pears sense.

Hamas supposedly demonstrated a degree of sadism in its killing spree on 7 October inside Israel that marks it out from Israel's far larger killing spree in Gaza.

That has been the basis for every media interview that requires guests to "condemn" Hamas before they are allowed to express concern about the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza. No one is asked to condemn Israel.

In Gaza, the hospital was our last place of sanctuary. Then Israel bombed it
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It is the basis too for permitting Israeli spokespeople to claim unchallenged that Israel targets only Hamas, not civilians, even while some three-quarters of Gaza's dead are women and children.

On the BBC's evening news at the weekend, presenter Clive Myrie made precisely this preposterous assertion as he intoned that since 7 October, "Israel launched a relentless bombing campaign targeting members of Hamas."

But the latest revelations of the 27 reported deaths in Israeli torture centres and the testimonies of beaten medics from Nasser Hospital confirm how bogus this entire narrative framing by the western media is – one intended to mislead and misinform audiences.

Israel claims it is targeting Hamas, but its actions tell an entirely different story. Famine will kill off the sick and vulnerable long before it does Hamas fighters.

The truth is, Israel is not primarily eradicating Hamas. It is eradicating Gaza. Its crimes are at least as cruel and savage as anything Hamas did on 7 October – and its atrocities have been carried out on a far larger scale and for far longer.

Western establishments and their media have been waging a giant campaign of misdirection for the past five months, as they have against Palestinians over previous years and decades. Western publics have been encouraged to look in the wrong direction.

Until that changes, the men, women and children of Gaza will continue to pay the heaviest of prices at the hands of a vengeful, sadistic Israeli military.

Jonas E. Alexis, Senior Editor

Jonas E. Alexis has degrees in mathematics and philosophy. He studied education at the graduate level. His main interests include U.S. foreign policy, the history of the Israel/Palestine conflict, and the history of ideas. He is the author of the book, ***Kevin MacDonald's Metaphysical Failure: A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Critique of Evolutionary Psychology, Sociobiology, and Identity Politics*****.** He teaches mathematics in South Korea.

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